**INTERCULTURALITY**

The need for language competence in a global society touches every sector of life. From career preparation in an international workforce to citizen diplomacy and national defense to one’s role in a social or virtual community, communication across cultures is the key. Learners today must have the

linguistic proficiency to communicate with global audiences, insight into the cultural perspectives that shape those audiences, and the ability to behave appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts. The following series of can-do statements organized around the language proficiency levels (*2012*

*ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines*) guide learners in their development of such linguistic and intercultural competences.

Intercultural competence, therefore, is the demonstration of interaction between the use of language skills and cultural knowledge. The national *Standards for Foreign Language Learning in the 21st Century* highlights the need for learners to understand the relationship between a culture’s perspectives and

its products and practices. A culture’s perspectives reflect the values, beliefs and attitudes of its people. Through contact with products (i.e., monuments, laws, music, etc.) developed by a culture and practices (eating habits, shopping behaviors, use of space, etc.) demonstrated by its people, we come to understand the perspectives (i.e., values, attitudes, beliefs, etc.) of a people.

Demonstrating intercultural competence requires both the ability to use the language and behave appropriately in cultural contexts. This may be particularly challenging for learners in the early stages of language learning who may not have the linguistic skill to address cultural perspectives in the language of study. It is the responsibility of all those who facilitate language learning be they teachers in FLES, immersion, middle/ high school, virtual or after-school programs, to provide opportunities for learners to experience language and culture together. Learners and educators must recognize that language and culture are inseparable.This requires the near exclusive use of the language of study. Thus, as language proficiency grows, so will intercultural competence.

Just as the proficiency level can-do statements of novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior are cumulative in nature for language competencies, they arecumulative for intercultural competencies as well. Learners demonstrate evidence of novice-level competencies first, then add evidence of intermediate-levelcompetencies and so forth. They continually add to their repertoire as they move up the proficiency continuum, applying knowledge of products and practicesbefore developing and applying an understanding of perspectives. The interaction of language and cultural competencies thus results in interculturality.

Unlike the language benchmarks and indicators, the interculturality can-do statements are not divided into low, mid, and high sublevels. Learners are expected to demonstrate the interculturality benchmarks when they have demonstrated the highest language proficiency sublevel. For example, learners who have

demonstrated *novice high* language competencies should also be demonstrating the *novice level* interculturality competencies.

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**Novice Level Intercultural Can-Do Statements**

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| **GLOBAL BENCHMARK*:* Investigation of Products and Practices**    ***I can identify some products and practices of cultures.*** | | | |
| **1) I can identify some common products related to home and community life of other cultures and my own.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can identify some geographical features of other countries.* * *I can identify familiar landmarks.* * *I can recognize some traditional and popular songs.* * *I can recognize some similarities and differences between the designs of houses, buildings, or towns.* * *I can identify specific locations to have a meal, purchase a ticket, or buy something that I need.* * *I can recognize some similarities and differences between my daily schedule and that of a peer in another culture.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **2) I can identify some common practices related to home and community life of other cultures and my own.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can identify some common habits of eating in other cultures.* * *I can identify some habits of dress in other cultures.* * *I can express the time and date as locals do.* * *I can sometimes use the appropriate holiday greeting.* * *I can…* | | | |

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| **GLOBAL BENCHMARK: Understanding of Cultural Perspectives**  ***I can identify some basic cultural beliefs and values.*** | | | |
| **3) I can identify some beliefs and values related to age, gender, social class and ethnicity.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can sometimes tell the way people address each other differently based on age and social standing.* * *I can sometimes recognize that appropriate dress is determined by cultural traditions.* * *I can recognize that gender and age can determine one’s role in a family, school, and the workplace.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **4) I can identify some characteristics of national identity.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can identify some elements of geography that define a nation.* * *I can identify symbols that represent a nation.* * *I can identify the importance of some historical events through their celebration on national holidays and monuments.* * *I can identify major religions of a nation.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **5) I can identify ways in which cultures are globalized.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can identify some similar leisure activities across cultures.* * *I can identify some similar forms of dress across cultures.* * *I can identify common fast food restaurants across cultures.* * *I can identify examples of common technology use across cultures.* * *I can…* | | | |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **GLOBAL BENCHMARK: Participation in Cultural Interaction**  ***I can function at a survival level in an authentic cultural context.*** | | | |
| **6) I can imitate some simple patterns of behavior in familiar settings across cultures.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can imitate appropriate greetings.* * *I can recognize and imitate table manners.* * *I can sometimes identify what is culturally appropriate to say when gift-giving in situations, such as in a birthday party, New Year’s, a wedding, etc.* * *I can recognize and imitate culturally appropriate behavior in a restaurant or other public place.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **7) I can use memorized language and very basic cultural knowledge to interact with others.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can sometimes ask and answer questions or make simple comments in a familiar cultural context such a family event or a social event with peers.* * *I can understand and mention a general cultural reference, such as a song or movie title, author or composer, in a conversation.* * *I can play a simple board or card game with friends.* * *I can…* | | | |
| **8) I can use memorized language, and very basic knowledge of the culture to accomplish simple, routine tasks.** | Yes | Yes, with assistance | One of my goals |
|  |  |  |
| *Examples:*   * *I can use a city map, GPS, or signs to help me find my way.* * *I can recognize and imitate how people count and use money in order to make a purchase.* * *I can follow a team’s win-loss record from a Web site.* * *I can…* | | | |

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